



**LISA MADIGAN**  
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL

## **Things You Should Know About..TRAVEL**

Although many travel opportunities are legitimate, some are scams that defraud consumers out of millions of dollars every month. To reduce your risk of becoming one of the many scammed, check out the tips below.

### **Common Travel Scams**

Con artists often use unsolicited mail, unsolicited phone calls, unsolicited faxes and deceptive advertising to get you to buy into travel scams. The “bargain” or “free” vacations offered in these situations often have hidden charges that can end up costing you two to three times more than what you would have paid if you had purchased the tickets yourself or through a reputable travel agency.

The offer may be a scam if...

- The trip is free or available at an unbelievably low price.
- Advertising promises a great deal but offers few details.
- You’re notified by mail or phone that you won a contest you didn’t enter.
- A caller pressures you to make an immediate decision.
- You must give a credit card number to reserve your place or buy something to qualify for the trip.
- You are required to disclose your annual income or take part in a seminar or sales pitch to qualify for the trip.
- You are unable to verify the vendor’s name, company name, street address or phone number.
- You are asked to send money before getting the details of the trip in writing or before reservations are confirmed.
- Airlines and hotels are not named but listed by generic descriptions such as “major airlines” or “first-class hotels.”
- You must pay for additional services at unspecified costs.

Before paying, check the company out with organizations such as the Consumer Fraud Bureau of the Illinois Attorney General’s Office, Better Business Bureau, Federal Trade Commission, and American Society of Travel Agents.

### **Making Travel Arrangements**

When planning a trip, you may choose to be your own travel agent or try one of the other options below. Whatever your decision, attention to detail and careful planning will help make your trip a success.

**Travel Agents** - Travel agents provide many services, including: making transportation arrangements; providing information on travel and luggage insurance, passports, inoculations, currency exchange, etc.; preparing individual itineraries; and arranging tours.

**Travel Packages** - Sold through travel agents, these prearranged vacations are put together by independent tour operators. Travel packages often combine convenience with value; however, you

should always make sure you know exactly what is included in a travel package before you buy. Always remember to read the fine print and check to see if any asterisks have been used to indicate restrictions or requirements for the package.

***Vacation Promotions*** - Companies often use “free” or “bargain” vacation offers to promote their services or merchandise or to simply attract more customers to their place of business. Vacation promotion offers vary greatly, and to get these vacations you may be required to make a purchase, attend a sales presentation, or pay a non-refundable processing and handling fee or a refundable deposit.

### **Taking Precautions**

To reduce your risk of becoming the victim of a travel scam, proceed cautiously when making travel arrangements. When you plan your next trip, remember to do the following:

- Deal with an established travel firm from which you have previously received satisfactory service or a firm recommended by friends and family.
- Check your contract and schedule carefully. Any transportation, lodging, meals or other items that are not specifically mentioned may not be included.
- Ask about your right to cancel and the availability of cancellation insurance.
- Get all information in writing before you pay.

Better Business Bureau

[www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

Federal Trade Commission

[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

### **Office of the Illinois Attorney General**

[www.ag.state.il.us](http://www.ag.state.il.us)

Chicago

(800) 386-5438

TTY: (800) 964-3013

Springfield

(800) 243-0618

TTY: (877) 844-5461

Carbondale

(800) 243-0607

TTY: (877) 675-9339